



I Am a Permanent Resident...

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How Do I...Get a Re-Entry Permit?



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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A re-entry permit can help prevent two types of problems: (1) Your Permanent Resident Card becoming technically invalid for re-entry into the United States (U.S.), if you are absent from the U.S. for 1 year or more. (2) Your U.S. permanent residence being considered as abandoned for absences shorter than 1 year, if you take up residence in another country.

A re-entry permit establishes a presumption that you did not abandon status, and it allows you to apply for admission to the U.S. after traveling abroad for up to 2 years, without having to obtain a returning resident visa. Re-entry permits are normally valid for 2 years from the date of issuance.

You may also want to get a re-entry permit if you plan on traveling outside the U.S. and cannot, *or do not wish* to get a passport from your home country. Many countries throughout the world may allow you to use a re-entry permit much like you would use a passport—placing necessary visas, and entry and exit stamps in the permit—so you may use it as your main travel document. Be sure to check with the country(ies) you plan on visiting about their requirements before you travel.

How do I get a re-entry permit?

If you want to get a re-entry permit, file **Form I-131**, *Application for Travel Document*. You should file this application well in advance of your planned trip. The I-131 is available on our website at uscis.gov.

The instructions on the form will give you more details. If you have questions after you read the instructions, just check our website or call customer service at 1-800-375-5283.

What will happen if I do not apply for a re-entry permit before I travel outside of the U.S.?

If you are a permanent resident who plans to travel outside of the U.S. for one year or more, it is important that you apply for a re-entry permit before you depart the U.S. If you stay outside of the U.S. for one year or more and did not apply for a re-entry permit before you left, then you may be considered to have abandoned your permanent resident status and may be refused entry into the U.S. if you try to return. If you are in this situation, contact the U.S. Consulate about a returning resident visa.

Can I apply for the re-entry permit and then leave, even though I don't have the re-entry permit in my possession yet?

U.S. immigration law does not require that you have the re-entry document in your possession when you depart, but it does require that you apply for the permit before you leave the U.S. We may be able to send your re-entry permit to the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in the country you plan on visiting, but you'll need to specifically request this when you file your I-131. If you choose this option, you should contact the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in the country you plan on visiting when you arrive, to let them know how to contact you while you are in that country. The U.S. Consulate or Embassy may then contact you if your application is approved and your permit has arrived there.

If you are planning to use the re-entry permit as a passport, then you will need to wait for it before leaving the U.S. If you cannot wait, you may want to contact the consulate of the country you are planning to visit to find out if you can use other documents to enter.

I have an old re-entry permit. Do I need to turn in my old permit if I am filing for a new one?

Re-entry permits can't be extended. If yours is expiring, when it expires you'll need to apply for a new one. If you have a valid re-entry permit in your possession, you will need to send it in when you apply for a new one. You need not send in an expired re-entry permit. For security reasons, USCIS will not issue a new re-entry permit to someone who already has a valid one in his or her possession. If you need a new re-entry permit because your previous one was lost, stolen, or destroyed, please indicate this on your application for the new permit.



Key Information

| Key forms referenced in this Fact Sheet | Form # |
|-----------------------------------------|--------|
| Application for Travel Document | I-131 |

USCIS

- **On the Internet at: uscis.gov**

For more copies of this Fact Sheet, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start! If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your library. If you can't find what you need, call customer service.

- **Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283**

- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is a basic guide to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, see our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.

Other U.S. Government Services—click or call

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|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| In general | www.firstgov.gov | 1-800-333-4636 |
| U.S. Department of State | www.state.gov | 1-202-647-6575 |
| National Center for Health Statistics | www.cdc.gov | 1-800-311-3435 |

